



Falling for Science: Objects in Mind

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"This is a book about science, technology, and love," writes Sherry Turkle. In it, we learn how a love for science can start with a love for an object -- a microscope, a modem, a mud pie, a pair of dice, a fishing rod. Objects fire imagination and set young people on a path to a career in science. In this collection, distinguished scientists, engineers, and designers as well as twenty-five years of MIT students describe how objects encountered in childhood became part of the fabric of their scientific selves. In two major essays that frame the collection, Turkle tells a story of inspiration and connection through objects that is often neglected in standard science education and in our preoccupation with the virtual. The senior scientists' essays trace the arc of a life: the gears of a toy car introduce the chain of cause and effect to artificial intelligence pioneer Seymour Papert; microscopes disclose the mystery of how things work to MIT President and neuroanatomist Susan Hockfield; architect Moshe Safdie describes how his boyhood fascination with steps, terraces, and the wax hexagons of beehives lead him to a life immersed in the complexities of design. The student essays tell stories that echo these narratives: plastic eggs in an Easter basket reveal the power of centripetal force; experiments with baking illuminate the geology of planets; LEGO bricks model worlds, carefully engineered and colonized. All of these voices -- students and mentors -- testify to the power of objects to awaken and inform young scientific minds. This is a truth that is simple, intuitive, and easily overlooked.

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